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## **Preface**

This Field Manual is dedicated to the men and women of the US Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps in the Active Component, the Army National Guard and the US Army Reserve – altogether America's finest fighting machine. Your soldiers depend on your guidance, training and leadership to win the Nation's wars. Wear your stripes with pride and honor. You are –

**“The Backbone of the Army.”**

### **PURPOSE**

FM 7-22.7 provides the Army's noncommissioned officers a guide for leading, supervising and caring for soldiers. While not all-inclusive nor intended as a stand-alone document, the guide offers NCOs a ready reference for most situations.

### **SCOPE**

The Army NCO Guide describes NCO duties, responsibilities and authority and how they relate to those of warrant and commissioned officers. It also discusses NCO leadership, counseling and mentorship and the NCO role in training. Of particular use are the additional sources of information and assistance described in the manual.

### **APPLICABILITY**

The Army NCO Guide provides information critical to the success of today's noncommissioned officers. This manual is for all NCOs of the Army, both active and reserve component. While especially important for new NCOs, this book will be useful to junior officers as well. Every NCO will benefit from reading and understanding FM 7-22.7.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

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Other sources of quotations and material used in examples are listed in the Source Notes.

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## ***Charge to the Noncommissioned Officer***

***I will discharge carefully and diligently the duties of the grade to which I have been promoted and uphold the traditions and standards of the Army.***

***I understand that soldiers of lesser rank are required to obey my lawful orders. Accordingly, I accept responsibility for their actions. As a noncommissioned officer, I accept the charge to observe and follow the orders and directions given by supervisors acting according to the laws, articles and rules governing the discipline of the Army, I will correct conditions detrimental to the readiness thereof. In so doing, I will fulfill my greatest obligation as a leader and thereby confirm my status as a noncommissioned officer.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

# **The NCO Vision**

**An NCO Corps, grounded in heritage, values and tradition, that embodies the warrior ethos; values perpetual learning; and is capable of leading, training and motivating soldiers.**

**We must always be an NCO Corps that**

- Leads by Example**
- Trains from Experience**
- Maintains and Enforces Standards**
- Takes care of Soldiers**
- Adapts to a Changing World**

*Effectively Counsels and Mentors Subordinates*  
*Maintains an Outstanding Personal Appearance*  
*Disciplined Leaders Produce Disciplined Soldiers*

SMA Jack L. Tilley  
12th Sergeant Major of the Army

# Introduction

By CSM Gary L. Littrell, US Army (ret.), MOH

I often think back to when I was a young NCO, a young buck sergeant in 1964 at the ripe age of 19 years old. I remember asking myself what would it take for me to be a great NCO? We didn't have NCO Academies. We didn't have noncommissioned officer guides. We had the experience of our senior NCOs and we had the day to day task of asking **ourselves** whether we wanted to be good sergeants and if so what would it take to make us good sergeants. And I thought the number one thing to becoming the best NCO I could be was to be respected. You see, respect is something that has to be earned. Respect is not issued to you with a set of orders and a set of stripes. Respect is something you earn by taking care of the soldiers that you train and supervise and prepare for combat.

One of the first problems that I encountered as a young sergeant — and I know many NCOs today go through the same trials and tribulations I did — is realizing the difference in being respected and being liked. I couldn't define the difference in being respected and being liked. It is human nature to want to be liked, but we can never sacrifice respect for that. The respect you gain through properly training your soldiers to succeed and in ensuring they and their families are taken care of may not always make you popular, but it will earn their respect. It takes a unique leader to be both liked and genuinely respected. Never confuse the two and never sacrifice respect because you want your soldiers to like you. It is far more important to consistently do the right thing.

You will earn your soldiers' respect by ensuring they are trained in all aspects of their job. Individual training is sergeant's business. I have always had a saying that we as NCOs deprive a soldier of his basic right to live if we send that soldier into combat without proper training. Basic soldier skills are important to all, not just to infantrymen or other combat arms soldiers, but also to mechanics, cooks or clerks — they, too, must be proficient in basic soldier skills. If a soldier goes into combat and these skills are weak, you as a sergeant have deprived that soldier of his basic right to live. He was untrained and he died.

We must never forget that the primary duties of a sergeant are to train and take care of that soldier's every need. A good NCO must know his soldiers inside and out. He must know their weaknesses and strengths. He must know the level of training of each individual soldier and if that soldier can work well with others, especially when they are placed in a very stressful situation — like combat.

Soldiers will make mistakes in training but be careful not to criticize them too harshly for those honest mistakes. Mistakes happen in training — they are

supposed to. Always compliment your troops in public, but if you have to correct them on a serious mistake do it in private. A mistake made in training can benefit everyone as long as you don't embarrass the soldier. Figure out what happened and why in the AAR – demand complete honesty – but then correct the mistake and train to standard.

A good leader cannot let a soldier do something wrong and not make an on-the-spot correction. If a soldier does something wrong and he knows that you saw him, he thinks it wasn't wrong because you didn't correct him or that you don't really care about him – either way that soldier is less effective and discipline suffers.

As a noncommissioned officer, we must always lead by example. And just as important we must never have double standards. We can't have a set of standards for ourselves and fellow noncommissioned officers and a different set of standards for our soldiers. We have got to lead by example, always up front and we can never ask a soldier to do something that we can't or will not do. Double standards will ruin the morale of your unit very, very rapidly. Have one set of standards for all and everyone maintains that same, strong set of standards.

This FM has a lot of information for NCOs of all ranks. It isn't the only book you will ever need but it can help direct your efforts and probably point you in the right direction in most situations. You'll see many historical references here. History can teach us much. Read about our Army's past and the NCOs who led its soldiers – you will find that their experience has relevance yet today.

Lead your soldiers with pride. Train them well and care for their needs as best you can. Ask senior NCOs for advice if you encounter a problem you don't know how to solve.

You are the defenders of our Nation and the caretakers of its future.



## **MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION**

CSM (then SFC) Gary L. Littrell (US Army, retired):

In April 1970, then SFC Gary L. Littrell, while assigned to US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Advisory Team 21, distinguished himself while serving as a Light Weapons Infantry Adviser with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Group, Republic Of Vietnam Army, near Dak Seang. After establishing a defensive perimeter on a hill on 4 April the battalion was subjected to an intense enemy mortar attack that killed the Vietnamese commander, one adviser and seriously wounded all the advisers except SFC Littrell. During the ensuing four days, SFC Littrell exhibited near superhuman endurance as he single-handedly bolstered the besieged battalion.

Repeatedly abandoning positions of relative safety, he directed artillery and air support by day and marked the unit's location by night, despite the heavy, concentrated enemy fire. His dauntless will instilled in the men of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion a deep desire to resist. The battalion repulsed assault after assault as the soldiers responded to the extraordinary leadership and personal example exhibited by SFC Littrell. He continuously moved to those points most seriously threatened by the enemy, redistributed ammunition, strengthened faltering defenses, cared for the wounded and shouted encouragement to the Vietnamese in their own language.

When the beleaguered battalion was finally ordered to withdraw, it encountered numerous ambushes. SFC Littrell repeatedly prevented widespread disorder by directing air strikes to within 50 meters of their position. Through his indomitable courage and complete disregard for his safety, he averted excessive loss of life and injury to the members of the battalion. Over an extended period of time, SFC Littrell sustained extraordinary courage and selflessness at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. His unyielding will, perseverance and courage remain shining examples of the warrior ethos in action.

## **Introductory Historical Vignettes**

### **SERGEANT PATRICK GASS AND THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION**

Patrick Gass was born on 12 June 1771 near Falling Springs, Pennsylvania. By the time he reached the age of forty, he had participated in Indian Wars, journeyed to the Pacific and back with Lewis and Clark, fought in the War of 1812 and displayed extreme valor in the battle of Lundy's Lane.

In 1791, Patrick's father was drafted in the militia protecting the Wellsburg, West Virginia area. Patrick volunteered to go in his father's place. This was Patrick's first taste of military life. He saw little action in the following months and soon returned home, but it was the start to a long military career.

For the next seven years, Gass was not in the military. Instead, he worked as a carpenter until his enlistment with the 19th Regiment in May 1799. Gass became a sergeant and served in various locations until the autumn of 1803. Captain Meriwether Lewis was looking for recruits for his expedition into the Northwest. Sergeant Gass quickly volunteered. His commander objected, not wanting to lose both a good soldier and carpenter. However, Sergeant Gass persisted and Captain Lewis accepted his enlistment.

Sergeant Gass, upon leaving his unit, became a private again. He started the journey with Lewis and Clark as one of a number of privates. The three sergeants in the Expedition were John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor and Charles Floyd.

As the expedition made its way up the Missouri, Sergeant Charles Floyd fell ill with bilious colic. On 20 August 1804, Sergeant Floyd died and was buried along the river's bluff. Six days later, Captain Clark ordered a vote to replace Floyd. The men chose privates Gass, Bratton and Gibson as candidates. In the first US election west of the Mississippi, Gass became a sergeant.

Sergeant Gass helped shepherd his men across the continent and back. Despite difficult conditions, Sergeant Gass led his men to complete the journey with no further loss. On more than one occasion Sergeant Gass' actions allowed the expedition to continue, most notable when he arrived at camp in time to decide the outcome of a battle the main group had become involved in. The Expedition explored the upper Missouri and Northwest, recording the people, animals and plant life of the area. Sergeant Gass was one of those who kept a detailed journal.

Though now a famous explorer, Sergeant Gass remained in the Army serving at Kaskaskia, Illinois. Shortly before the War of 1812, he joined General Andrew Jackson in fighting the Creek Indians. After completing that action, Gass enlisted once again in the regular army. He then served at Fort Massac in 1813 and at Pittsburgh in 1814. He took part in the assault on Fort Erie and served with the 21st Infantry at Lundy's Lane. Ultimately, he received his final discharge at Sackett's Harbor in June 1815.

At the age of forty, Sergeant Gass returned to Wellsburg, West Virginia to spend the rest of his life. He lived for nearly forty more years, becoming the oldest survivor of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Sergeant Patrick Gass showed the value of a good NCO – to the future of an entire Nation.

### **SERGEANT JAMES RISSLER IN THE BATTLE OF SHAHI-KOT -- "THE 18-HOUR MIRACLE"**

At 0300 hours on 2 March 2002, C Company, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry walked about a mile and a half to the flight line in full gortex, poly-pro and full field uniform. They sat in chalk order until their loading time of 0500 hours. Their flight to LZ 13A gave them a touch down time of 0600 hours. SGT James Rissler was a Senior Medic of an Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) team attached to the Infantry Company. According to Rissler, they loaded one of the CH-47s with 34 packs and rucks. The flight was to take them from Bagram Airbase at 4,200 feet to LZ 13A in Shahi-Kot valley to just outside the city of Marzak at 10,500 feet in just an hour's time. Their mission set up blocking positions outside the city of Marzak while Zia forces pushed the Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces in their direction.

The flight left at 0500 hours as planned and touched down at LZ 13A at 0600 hours. When the chopper touched down, the unit hastily split and went off to the left and right sides of the aircraft and soldiers assumed prone positions. Once the aircraft had taken off, the unit immediately started receiving small arms fire. The problem was that no one could locate the direction of fire, so they dropped their rucks and ran up the side of a small ridge. Soon realizing that the direction of fire was coming from the same side they were on, they ran to the top of the ridge to the other side to take cover. Once Sergeant Rissler reached the top of the ridge, an RPG round exploded about 10 feet from him and a piece of shrapnel hit him in the knee.

Once they all got to the other side, the unit consolidated and started constructing fighting positions. Soldiers were placed on a small observation post to the right of the unit, but were quickly targeted by Mortar fire also. The Mortars adjusted fire and the unit took 13 casualties by the time the second round hit. The unit then realized that the enemy forces were running out of the city of Marzak to surround them, which meant that they would now be taking fire from three sides, being targeted by Mortar fire. Sergeant Rissler set up a

Command and Control Post at the bottom of the ridge and it was quickly targeted. As the enemy continued to adjust fire on them, Sergeant Rissler and other soldiers would drag as many casualties up and down the ridge as possible, covering their bodies with theirs to protect them as the rounds detonated.

While moving the soldiers up and down the hill, Sergeant Rissler was wounded a second time, taking fragments in the hand. Both times he was wounded he treated himself. Moving the injured soldiers up and down the ridge was only aggravating the injuries; consequently, each time a soldier was moved, controlling of bleeding and treatment of wound started all over again. The Mortar fire would slow down when fire missions were called in from the F-16s and AC 130s, allowing Sergeant Rissler and other soldiers to dig pits in the center of the valley to put the patients in and using dirt or whatever materials found to cover the wounded. All patients were stabilized and the unit lay in their positions returning fire until nightfall.

As night started to set in, Sergeant Rissler knew that it would be getting very cold soon. With the amount of blood lost through the day and the rapid decrease in temperature the patients would probably go into shock. So Sergeant Rissler used tape to repair the wounded soldiers' clothing and covered the soldiers with whatever he had to prevent shock. Then he and other soldiers lay on the wounded patients to maintain their body temperature. Finally, when night fell MEDEVAC could get to the site. The first helicopter received two Mortar rounds and heavy small arms fire. Another AC-130 was called in to cover the evacuation. In all, 25 wounded were evacuated with no fatalities. Around 0200 hours the next morning, Sergeant Rissler and the rest of the unit were extracted.